

The Articles of Confederation (1777)

In 1777 with war raging between Britain and the United States, the Continental Congress agreed to the Articles of Confederation, a frame of government outlining the relationship between the thirteen states. The Articles were ratified by each state individually. They formally went into effect in 1781 after being ratified by all thirteen states of the United States. As you read the document think about how you might characterize the power of the central government created by the Articles. Also think about the relationship the Articles create between the central government and the several states.

We the undersigned Delegates of the States... agree to certain articles of Confederation and perpetual Union....

Article I. The Stile of this confederacy shall be "The United States of America."

Article II. Each state retains its sovereignty, freedom and independence and every Power, Jurisdiction and right which is not by this confederation expressly delegated to the United States, in Congress assembled.

Article III. The said states hereby severally enter into a firm league of friendship with each other, for their common defence, the security of their Liberties, and their mutual and general welfare, binding themselves to assist each other against all force offered to, or attacks made upon them, or any of them, on account of religion, sovereignty, trade or any other pretence whatever.

Article V. For the more convenient management of the general interests of the united states, delegates shall be annually appointed in such manner as the legislature of each state shall direct, to meet in Congress... with a power reserved to each state to recall its delegates, or any of them, at any time within the year, and to send others in their stead, for the remainder of the year...

In determining questions in the united states, in Congress assembled, each state shall have one vote.

Article VIII. All charges of war, and all other expenses that shall be incurred for the common defence or general welfare, and allowed by the united states in congress assembled, shall be defrayed out of a common treasury, which shall be supplied by the several states... The taxes for paying that proportion shall be laid and levied by the authority and direction of the legislatures of the several states...

Article IX. The united states in congress assembled shall never engage in war... nor enter into any treaties or alliances, nor coin money, nor regulate the value thereof, nor ascertain the sums and expences necessary for the defence and welfare of the united states, nor any of them, emit bills, nor borrow money on the credit of the united states, nor appropriate money, nor agree upon the vessels of war, to be built or purchased, or the number of land and sea forces to be raised, unless nine states assent to the same...

Article XIII. Every state shall abide by the determinations of the united states in congress assembled, on all questions which by this confederation are submitted to them. And the articles of this confederation shall be inviolably observed in every state, and the union shall be perpetual; nor shall any alteration at any time hereafter be made in any of them; unless such alteration be agreed to in a congress of the united states, and be afterwards confirmed by the legislatures of every state.